

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 /024 R

66011

DRAFTED BY NEA/RA:JVMONTVILLE

APPROVED BY WDOZIER

EUR/SE:ESMITH(INFO)

NEA/PAB:MHORNBLW

-----018262 311049Z /15

R 310131Z MAY 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4605

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FOL RPT KABUL 4349 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO ISLAMABAD, JIDDA,
KUWAIT, MOSCOW, NEW DELHI, TEHRAN & PEKING DTD 30 MAY 78

QUOTE: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KABUL 4349

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, AF

SUBJECT: TARAKI INSISTS THAT HIS REGIME AND ISLAM ARE NOT
INCOMPATIBLE

1. SUMMARY. IN A RECENT INTERVIEW WITH A KUWAITI JOURNALIST,
NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAKI, CHAIRMAN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL
AND PRIME MINISTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN
(DRA), HAS AGAIN EMPHASIZED THAT THE PRINCIPLES OF HIS REGIME
ARE NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH THOSE OF ISLAM. THE AFGHAN LEADER
ALSO HIT HARD AT THE ALLEGED DISREGARD RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN
OTHER MUSLIM COUNTRIES HAVE HAD FOR THE MASSES IN THOSE COUNTRIES.
HE CLAIMED FURTHER THAT "THE TOILING PEOPLE" OF AFGHANISTAN
SUPPORT THE APRIL 27 REVOLUTION AND WILL THEMSELVES PRESERVE
ISLAM IN THIS COUNTRY. TARAKI OBVIOUSLY WAS TRYING TO DERAIL
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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANY POTENTIAL RESISTANCE TO THIS REGIME FROM
THE RELIGIOUS QUARTER, BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER,
IN THE LONG RUN, THE DEEPLY RELIGIOUS MAJORITY OF THE AFGHAN
POPULATION WILL PEACEFULLY ACCEPT THE DICTATES OF A LEFTIST-
ORIENTED LEADERSHIP WHICH MAY EVENTUALLY REVEAL ITSELF TO BE
"GODLESS." TARAKI AND HIS COLLEAGUES APPEAR CONVINCED, AS THEY
SHOULD BE, THAT THE TOUGHEST NUT THEY WILL HAVE TO CRACK

IN CONSOLIDATING DOMESTIC POWER WILL BE THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE MASSES. END SUMMARY.

2. TARAKI'S INTERVIEW WITH KUWAITI JOURNALIST BADWA FAMI (THE TEXT OF THE MAY 23 "KABUL TIMES" TRANSCRIPT IS BEING SENT SEPTEL ESSENTIALLY FOCUSED ON TARAKI'S PERCEPTION OF THE FUTURE OF ISLAM IN AFGHANISTAN, BUT IT ALSO CONTAINED SEVERAL EXCHANGES REGARDING WHETHER THE NEW REGIME IS MARXIST OR COMMUNIST. TARAKI'S GENERAL THESIS ON ISLAM ASSERTED THAT THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT IN OTHER MUSLIM COUNTRIES HAD FALLEN UNDER THE CONTROL OF EXPLOITERS WHO, ACCORDING TO TARAKI, WOULD DO BETTER TO DEVOTE MORE ATTENTION TO FREEDOM, JUSTICE, PROGRESS, AND WELL-BEING OF THEIR TOILING PEOPLE, RATHER THAN EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT AFFAIRS IN AFGHANISTAN. HE ADDED THAT THE AFGHAN PEOPLE, NOT THOSE WHO USE RELIGION TO GAIN ADVANTAGE, WEALTH, AND POSITION, WILL NOW CONSTITUTE THE "VANGUARD" OF ISLAM, AND WILL PRESERVE ITS TENETS. HE ADDED THAT SEVERAL YEARS HENCE, AFGHANISTAN WILL HAVE THE MOST "UNADULTERATED" ISLAM EXTANT, AND ISLAM WHICH OSTENSIBLY "WILL NEVER BE MISUSED FOR MATERIAL AND PERSONAL GAINS OF DESPOTS AND EXPLOITERS."

3. THE ISSUE OF WHETHER OR NOT THIS REGIME IS MARXIST OR COMMUNIST ALSO EMERGED, BUT TARAKI WAS EVASIVE AND OFFERED LITTLE CLARIFICATION OF POSITIONS HE HAS EXPRESSED EARLIER IN OTHER SPEECHES OR INTERVIEWS. HE REITERATED THAT ANYONE WHO SPOKE OF "NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, FREEDOM OF THE PEOPLE, DEMOCRACY, PROGRESS,

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SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND PROSPERITY OF THE TOILING, "IS BRANDED A COMMUNIST. HE DODGED A QUERY REGARDING THE POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF "EUROCOMMUNISM" IN AFGHANISTAN, CLAIMING THAT THE REGIME DISCHARGED ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD THE "TOILING PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY INDEPENDENTLY." IN THIS REGARD, HE CLAIMED THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN A GOOD FRIEND OF AFGHANISTAN SINCE THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION, THAT IT WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO RECOGNIZE NOT ONLY AFGHANISTAN'S INDEPENDENCE IN 1919, BUT THE DAOUD GOVERNMENT IN 1973 (AS WELL AS HIS OWN GOVERNMENT), AND THAT IT WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO EXTEND ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE "WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED."

4. COMMENT. TARAKI'S FOCUS ON THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES OF HIS REGIME AND THOSE OF ISLAM UNDERSCORES THE LEADERSHIP'S APPARENT AWARENESS THAT THIS ISSUE MUST BE CONFRONTED AND DEALT WITH SUCCESSFULLY IF TARAKI AND HIS COLLEAGUES WANT TO RETAIN ANY SEMBLANCE OF LEGITIMACY WITHIN THE COUNTRY. HIS REASSURING COMMENTS WERE OBVIOUSLY ADDRESSED TO THE NEAR TERM, AND PROBABLY WERE DESIGNED TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN THE DEVOUTLY MUSLIM MASSES AND THE RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY HERE. MOREOVER, TARAKI UNQUESTIONABLY WANTED TO REASSURE THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES (SUCH AS KUWAIT AND SAUDI

ARABIA) THAT UNBELIEVERS HAVE NOT, IN FACT, SEIZED THE REINS OF POWER IN KABUL.

5. IN THE LONGER TERM, HOWEVER, THE REGIME'S INTENTIONS ARE MUCH LESS CLEAR, AND WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT COMPLETELY THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE NEW RULERS OF THIS COUNTRY ENVISAGE SOME SORT OF SYSTEM NOT WHOLLY UNLIKE THAT WHICH PREVAILS IN PREVIOUSLY DEVOUTLY ISLAMIC REGIONS NORTH OF THE AMU DARYA. MANY PERSONS IN THIS COUNTRY -- OR THEIR FATHERS OR GRANDFATHERS-- FLED THE ADVENT OF THE NEW ORDER IN CENTRAL ASIA IN THE EARLY TWENTIES. CONCEIVABLY, LONG MEMORIES OF WHAT HAPPENED THERE AND DEEPLY ROOTED LOCAL DEVOTION TO ISLAM WILL PRESENT THE NSW AFGHAN LEADERS WITH FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES IN THE YEARS TO COME.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES, FORM OF GOVERNMENT, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE137077
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JVMONTVILLE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780227-0138
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978053/aaaaabrx.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d5944698-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2604573
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TARAKI INSISTS THAT HIS REGIME AND ISLAM ARE NOT INCOMPATIBLE
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, SOCI, AF, (TARAKI, NOOR MOHAMMAD)
To: ANKARA
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d5944698-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014